ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS AND IMMUNE CELL PHENOTYPES IN THE PERIPHERAL BLOOD OF YOUNGER AND OLDER SUBJECTS
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Immunosenescence is a descriptive term for age-associated changes to immunity that are deleterious for health and longevity. Assessment of multiple immunological parameters reveals immune signatures informative for morbidity and mortality in longitudinal studies of the very elderly. These are likely to be influenced by many non-immunological parameters including health, socioeconomic conditions, genetics, nutrition, psychological and cognitive status, pathogen exposures, and other factors. Here, we relate socioeconomic score (SES) as assessed in the BASE-II study (incorporating current occupational position, weighted income (in the household), vocational and educational level), in people aged 25-35 or 65-80. We find that SES associates with the distribution of adaptive but not innate immune cells in the blood and that these parameters are strongly affected by the subjects infection with Cytomegalovirus (CMV).

SECULAR CHANGES IN LATE-LIFE COGNITION AND WELL-BEING: TOWARDS A LONG BRIGHT FUTURE WITH A SHORT BRISK ENDING?

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Secular increases favoring later-born cohorts in fluid intelligence measures are widely documented for young adults. Here, we quantify such trends in old age using data from highly comparable participants living in a narrowly defined geographical area and examine whether these trends generalize to quality of life indicators. To do so, we compare data obtained 20 years apart in the Berlin Aging Study (in 1990–93) and the Berlin Aging Study II (in 2013–14), applied a case-matched control design (per cohort, n = 161, M(age) = 75) and controlled for number of physical diseases. The later cohort performed better on the fluid intelligence measure (d = .85) and reported higher well-being (ds > .39) than the earlier cohort. We conclude that secular advances have resulted in better cognitive performance and perceived quality of life among older adults and discuss when and how advantages of later cohorts reach their limits.

THE ’SUBJECTIVE HEALTH HORIZON’ AND ITS ASSOCIATION TO PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSIOLOGICAL SOURCES OF BEING EXPLORATIVE IN AGING

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Lifestyles associated with exposure to novel and varied information, or enriched environments, are considered beneficial for healthy cognitive aging. The motivation to engage in a physically and cognitively active lifestyle requires long-term decisions, and the persistent pursuit of enduring goals. We previously investigated whether the ability to make such decisions depends, in part, on motivated choices that are shaped and limited by one’s own future time perspective. In order to assess this motivation we validated a newly developed instrument, the ”Subjective Health Horizon Questionnaire (SHH-Q)” in the older participants of the Berlin Aging Study II. We found that individuals who greater self-reported orientation to engage in future novelty (such as novel cognitive or social activities) show better episodic memory, a cognitive ability relevant for the acquisition and consolidation of new information. We now use the multidimensional dataset of BASE-II (N=1800, 51% woman; mean age 70.9 years) to disentangle how (i) psychosocial indicators of motivation such as control beliefs and (ii) structural integrity of brain regions that are functionally related to future thinking and goal-directed behaviour mediating this aforementioned association.

ASSOCIATIONS OF NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTERISTICS WITH HEALTH AND WELL-BEING PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN OLD AGE

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Neighborhood characteristics are important determinants of individual health and well-being. However, there is still a lack of empirical evidence on age differentials in associations of neighborhood characteristics with the health and well-being of residents who live in their surroundings. This paper studies associations of a wide range of neighborhood characteristics with the health and well-being of residents in Germany, using data from the Berlin Aging Study II (BASE-II), including 312 younger and 993 older residents, and geo-referenced indicators on neighborhood characteristics.